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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [IZ](#) [AL](#) [EG](#)
SUBJECT: DEMARCHE DELIVERED: IRAQ NEIGHBORS CONFERENCE

REF: STATE 107327

Classified By: Political Counselor Margaret Scobey for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary. On June 30, Pol/C delivered reftel demarche to Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari, who acknowledged the USG perspective, but said that after discussing the matter with the Prime Minister, they have decided that he would attend the Iraq Neighbors Conference in Tehran July 8-9. FM said that plans for exchanging ambassadors with Syria will move forward but slowly. FM indicated that he is seeking a retirement waiver for Iraq's Ambassador-designate to Cairo. Zebari reported that plans for the Arab League Conference are underway. End Summary.

¶2. (C) On June 30, Pol/C delivered demarche (reftel) to FM Zebari. Zebari said that he previously had spoken to Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki about the USG perspective on the conference (based on the last demarche). Zebari reminded Pol/Cs that he had already worked to delay the conference on two previous occasions. He said a number of senior Iraqi visitors to Tehran have made very clear Iraq's insistence that Iran stop interfering in Iraqi affairs. Overall, he said that he and the PM had concluded that it would be a grave insult for Iraq's Foreign Minister not to attend. Pol/C urged the FM to reconsider and to discuss this again with the Prime Minister.

EXCHANGE OF AMBASSADORS WITH SYRIA AND EGYPT

¶3. (C) Zebari updated Pol/C on the decision for a simultaneous exchange of ambassadors with Syria. He said that he believed that Iraq was better off engaging the GOS than not and would likely go forward, although he would insist that the Syrians do a better job policing the border. Zebari said that the PM was reluctant to go forward with Syria because of its interference in Iraq and that the PM did not want to re-establish ties and then have to break them off if the interference increased or persisted. Zebari said that the PM has postponed a final decision pending further discussions, but then said he thought it important that the entire Council of Ministers be involved in the decision on this issue. Pol/C noted our history with Syria failing to fulfill its promises to us and supported going slow to assess Syrian behavior. Zebari claimed that Iraq would not be in a hurry to exchange ambassadors.

¶4. (C) Zebari said that GOE has given its agreement on Deputy Foreign Minister of Multi-lateral Affairs Hajj Hamoud Bidan to be the Iraq's next Ambassador to Egypt. However, FM said he must seek a waiver for Dr. Hamoud from the PM, because Hamoud is beyond maximum retirement age.

15. (C) Zebari reported that plans for the Arab League are moving forward and that Deputy Foreign Minister for Finance and Administration Saad al-Hayani will attend the preparatory meetings in Cairo. (Note: If a retirement extension is not granted to Bidan, Hayani who is designated to be Iraq's next Ambassador to Jordan will take Bidan's place in Cairo. End Note) Zebari squashed rumors that the GOI was going to cancel the conference. He said that if the conference is held, Iraq's Arab League countries could no longer claim that the GOI does not want to engage its neighbors.
Khalilzad